





**Exploration of microtopia based on issues of surveillance  
in the Kamppi shopping center**

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**Master Programme in Product and Spatial Design**  
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**Thanks to Jinhee, June, Andy, Pasi, Teemu and my Family.**



**TWO BOXES**



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### Abstract

This thesis involves four main categories: an exploration of the term 'microtopia' and discussion of related works, research on Kamppi Shopping Center as a specific spot for this thesis, research into surveillance issues as a means of exploring microtopia, and, lastly, the installation work I planned, TWO BOXES.

'Microtopia' is primarily a term mentioned in a book, "Relational Aesthetics," written by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud. The main meaning of the word "microtopia" is that an artist should arrange ideal but realistic moments instead of seeking imaginary and remote utopian realities, which is the strongest notion in this thesis. In addition, because microtopia is based on 'the public sphere,' I focused on the public context by studying popular spots in Helsinki. Through this field work, I became very interested in 'Surveillance issues in public space' because of its ironic characteristics: although the word 'public' means 'general and for all people,' in reality there are many guards who monitor the flow of people in metro, bus, and train stations, and even in public squares. In that sense, I wish to address the question, 'Who has the access to enter and who does not?' I aimed to explore microtopia based on surveillance issues; that is to say, in this thesis, I attempt to identify the ideal level of surveillance. Based on the two keywords 'microtopia' and 'surveillance,' a participatory installation, TWO BOXES, was planned in Kamppi Shopping Center in order to explore the concept of microtopia. I will illustrate how the concept and details of TWO BOXES arose and discuss in detail its implementation in Kamppi Shopping center. In the conclusion, I share the feedback that I received from participants, discuss the drawbacks of the project, and give ideas for future work based on the findings.

In order to avoid confusion on the part of readers, I should mention that, although my major is Spatial Design, which is largely related to architecture and interior design, I am actually more interested in conceptual and intangible spaces than physically touchable and logical ones. For this reason, this thesis is written in a conceptual and artistic way. Furthermore, for the same reason, I want to present the 'moving and changing' characteristics of space in terms of social interventions.

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**Keywords** Microtopia, Kamppi shopping center, Surveillance, Participatory art installation

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**CHAPTER**





# 1

## Introduction



## 1.1. Contents of Thesis

This thesis involves four main categories: an exploration of the term ‘microtopia’ and discussion of related works, research on Kamppi Shopping Center as a specific spot for this thesis, research into surveillance issues as a means of exploring microtopia, and, lastly, the installation work I planed, TWO BOXES.

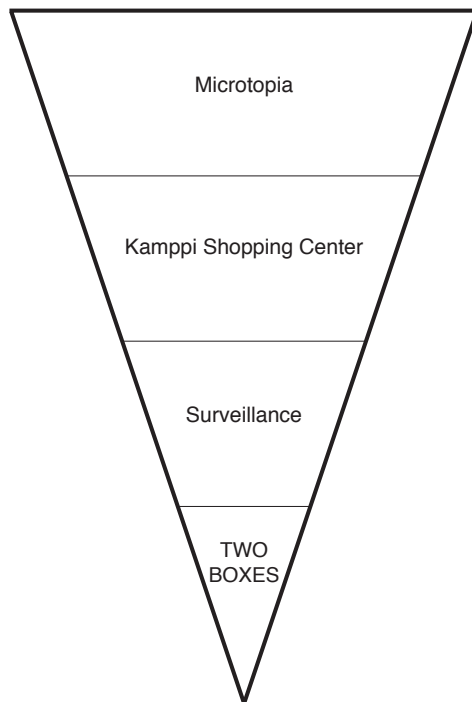


Figure 1: Diagram of the overall contents of this thesis

In other words, as you can see in Figure 1, this thesis starts with the introduction of a key concept of ‘microtopia,’ in a broad sense, which is followed by the narrower topic of surveillance in public space as an example of ‘microtopia,’ and, finally, continues with the implementation of TWO BOXES based on the researched concepts and backgrounds.

‘Microtopia’ is primarily a term mentioned in a book, “*Relational Aesthetics*,” written by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud. The following is the definition of the term in the book:

*“The incursion of essentially private symbolic spaces, intimate projects, in the public sphere.”*

*(Bourriaud 2002)*

The main meaning of the word “microtopia” is that an artist should arrange ideal but realistic moments instead of seeking imaginary and remote utopian realities, which is the strongest notion in this thesis. In addition, because microtopia is based on ‘the public

sphere,' as stated in the above definition, I focused on the public context by studying popular spots in Helsinki. Through this field work, I became very interested in 'Surveillance issues in public space' because of its ironic characteristics: although the word 'public' means 'general and for all people,' in reality there are many guards who monitor the flow of people in metro, bus, and train stations, and even in public squares. In that sense, I wish to address the question, 'Who has the access to enter and who does not?' I aimed to explore microtopia based on surveillance issues; that is to say, in this thesis, I attempt to identify the ideal level of surveillance.

Based on the two keywords 'microtopia' and 'surveillance,' a participatory installation, TWO BOXES, was planned in Kamppi Shopping Center in order to explore the concept of microtopia. I will illustrate how the concept and details of TWO BOXES arose and discuss in detail its implementation in Kamppi Shopping center. In the conclusion, I share the feedback that I received from participants, discuss the drawbacks of the project, and give ideas for future work based

on the findings.

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## 1.2. Objectives

The overall objectives of this thesis are the following:

1. Exploration of a 'microtopia' based on issues of surveillance in the public sphere with others' participation, which allows for generation of a totally different spatial context and a moment of deviation from the previously accepted norms and practices
2. Research on the moving and unceasing characteristics of space
3. Research on relational aesthetics and connecting social relation with the exploration of microtopia

The followings are the three research questions that this thesis answers.

1. What is 'Microtopia' and its related works?
2. What are the factors that define a space's dynamic characteristics? And, how can such factors be controlled in order to design a novel spatial context for a microtopia?
3. What is the spatial and social context of the Kamppi shopping center? And, how can it be connected to the microtopia?

4. How can I create a novel spatial context in Kamppi shopping center based on the issues of surveillance in public space using the dynamic factors of the space?

### 1.3. Motivation

#### 1.3.1. Unseen yourself, 2013 + Interruption, 2015

*Is it really impossible to have utopia in reality?*

*What is the exact definition of utopia?*

*Does the definition of utopia vary depending on different perspectives or contexts?*

This series of questions became a strong starting point for this thesis and became its backbone all through the research and implementation processes.

The word 'Utopia' originated with the combination of the Greek words ou (meaning "no, not") plus topos (meaning "place"), and referred to 'an imaginary and indefinitely remote place.' (More 2002) Based on the original definition of 'utopia,' I began to think in a paradoxical way: how about manifesting utopia in reality by reframing the concept in a different, more realistic perspective? That is, I think that utopia can be present in reality, not only in an ideal, faraway world, depending on how we define the word 'utopia.'

*... Platonov's work constitutes a meditation on actually existing utopia; not in the sense of a realization of the otherwise impossible, nor in the sense of a documentation of a 'utopia' that has failed but in the sense of the presence of the absolute as it inserts itself into the here and now.*

*(More 2002)*

As stated in the article Counter-Utopia, I wish to realize the 'actually existing Utopia' into the here and now. So, in this thesis, I attempt to create a real, small-scale utopia, 'microtopia,' and arrange it in real space. In addition to the series of questions above, two previous works of mine gave me motivation for this thesis project.

#### - *Unseen Yourself*, 2013

I reinterpreted the works of my favorite artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, who is one of the leading artists working in relational aesthetics, in the form of "workshop-space" planning. I attempted to design each section of the work to encourage friendship between the participants and allow each participant to discover unseen images by drawing others or the self

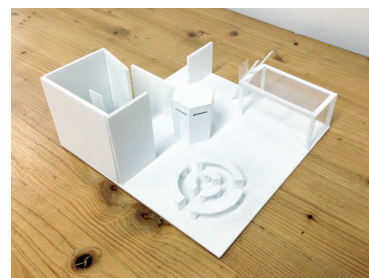
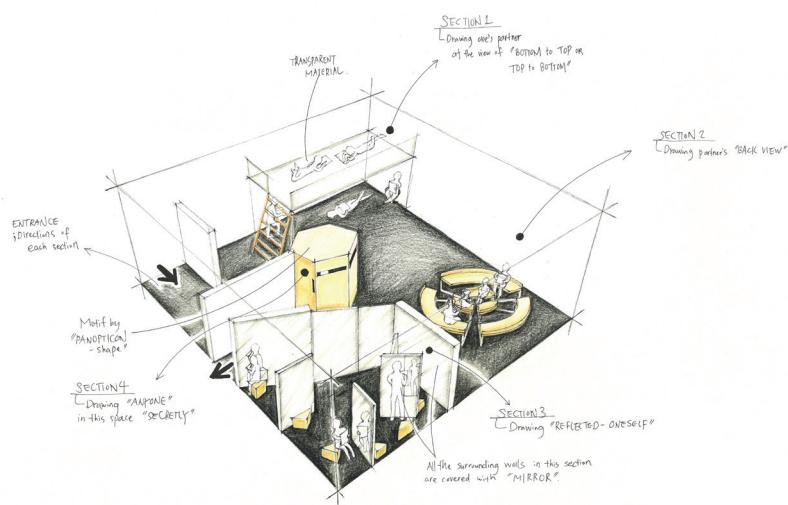


Figure 2: *Unseen yourself*, 2013

from different points of view – top, bottom, back, reflected, and secretly seen one's appearance. I designed manuals for each section in order to give guidance to participants. The space itself was incomplete, and was meant to be completed by active participation and the mutual exchanges between visitors.

In this workshop space, I defined a 'microtopia,' a small, fleeting instance of utopia, as a space where people can obtain a sense of

intimacy and see their own unusual appearance by participating in a playful workshop with friends or even strangers.

*Unseen yourself* left much to be desired because it existed only in a virtual space, not in the physical world. Therefore, I have eager to plan the conceptual space of 'Microtopia,' in some size or format it is, in a physical context, and that eagerness became the first motivation for this thesis.

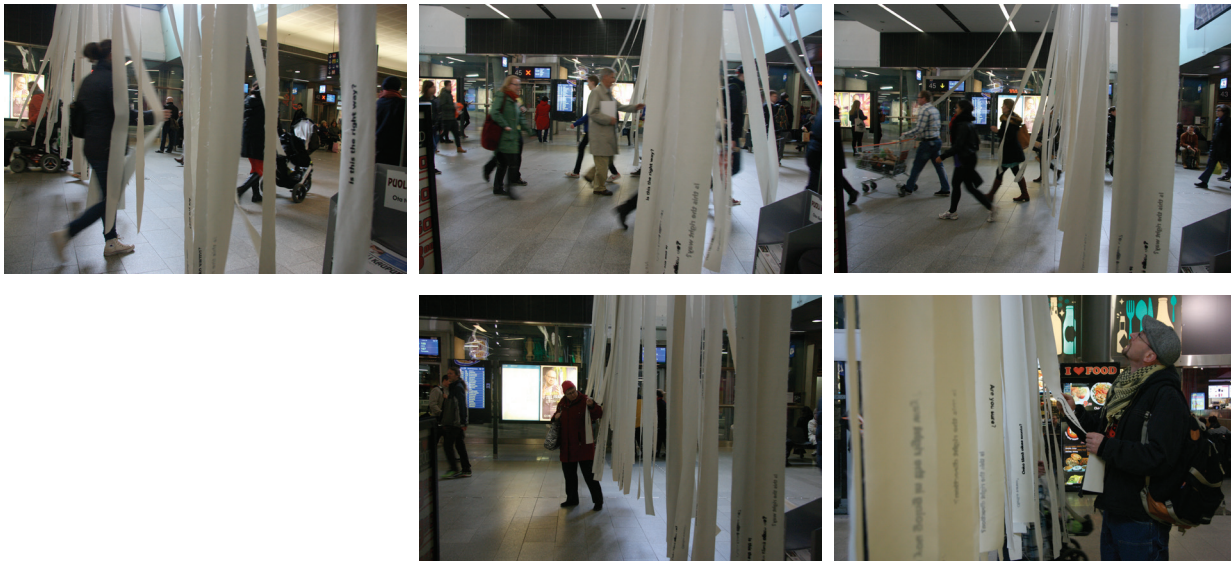


Figure 3: *Interruption*, 2015  
In Kamppi Shopping Center

- *Interruption*, 2015

*Interruption*, the second motivation for this thesis, targeted the Kamppi shopping center, which is one of the busiest spots in the center of Helsinki. I chose the E level of the center, where bus terminals and commercial shops densely coexist along a long corridor, which has the largest number of daily visitors.

I wanted to arrange something that would interrupt busy people who would then just keep walking along the corridor. In other words, I wanted to slightly block the way of the people in the corridor, not to create an obstruction but to give people this simple message: there might be a more crucial thing for you to focus on or a better direction for you to go in than straight ahead. Actually, the work lasted for just 4 hours because of safety issues (because the particular spot I chose was right in the middle of the main flow of people in the Kamppi shopping center).

The format of the work was not firm or physically hard; I used fire-proof fabric, which is smooth, soft and not harmful at all, in order to just visually block the busy corridor.

Following the implementation of *Interruption*, I began to be interested in participatory installations that enable artists to get various reactions out of people and deliver messages to them. However, I considered the fact that I did not directly communicate with the participants a crucial drawback of this project. The reactions to the installation were quite varied, depending on the individual who saw it, from being very curious and briefly pausing to being angry and saying, "Are you the fucking person who made this piece of waste that is in my way?" which was also precious feedback for me. So, I could get a crucial learning point from this work that it would be beneficial to hear and collect participants' opinions about my work and incorporate that data into future works.

I am greatly interested in participatory art works and agree with the opinion that active interactions between participants are essential in generating a microtopia. Based on my interest in the concept of microtopia, and using the above-mentioned two previous works as motivation, I set out to explore the concept of microtopia in physical space in this thesis.

**CHAPTER**







# 2

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**Defining the Subject Matter  
(Background + Related works)**

## 2.1. What is Microtopia?

‘Relational Aesthetics’ is a book that was written by French curator Nicholas Bourriaud. He defined ‘Relational Aesthetics’ as the following:

*A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.*

*(Bourriaud 2002)*

‘Microtopia’ is a term mentioned in the book, which was a strong starting point for this thesis. The following is the definition of the term given in the book:

*“The incursion of essentially private symbolic spaces, intimate projects, in the public sphere.*

*... The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action*

*within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artists.”*

*(Bourriaud 2002)*

Bourriaud drew a firm line between relational aesthetics and previous works by mentioning the shifting attitudes towards social change: instead of attempting to carry out a utopian agenda, today’s artists seek only to find provisional solutions in the here and now; instead of trying to change their environment, artists today are simply “learning to inhabit the world in a better way;” instead of looking forward to a future utopia, this type of art sets up functioning microtopias in the present (Bourriaud 2002). Bourriaud summed up the new attitudes into one sentence:

*“It seems more pressing to invent possible relations with our neighbors in the present than to bet on happier tomorrows”*

*(Bourriaud 2002)*

Bourriaud perceived the ‘microtopian ethos’ as a core political element of relational



Figure 4: *Untitled (free)*, Rirkrit tiravanija

aesthetics. I wish to maintain the microtopian ethos as a core element of this thesis as well.

Regarding the definition and specific scope of the term, microtopia and relational aesthetic art itself have been discussed by many critics and artists. The best example may be found in an essay, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, written by an art critic, Clair Bishop. Bishop recognizes Bourriaud's work as a vital initial step in identifying tendencies in the art of the 1990s. However, Bishop also asks,

*"If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?"*

*She continues*

*"... the relations set up by relational aesthetics are not intrinsically democratic, as Bourriaud suggests, since they rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as a whole and of community as immanent togetherness."*

*(Bishop 2004)*

Tiravanija's first solo exhibition at 303 Gallery, which arranged a moment of 'social intervention' with rice and Thai curry, is useful in explaining Bishop's criticism. With its simple conceptual format, the work entitled *Untitled (Free)* invited visitors to interact with the contemporary art piece in a more social way by being a component of the work. However, there was a crucial drawback to the work: the participants in the work were exclusively composed of like-minded art lovers and groups of art-world people including artists

and art dealers. That is, *Untitled (Free)* could not bring ordinary people into the social intervention as stated in the following mentions.

*Such communication is fine to an extent, but it is not in and of itself emblematic of "democracy." ... Tiravanija's microtopia gives up on the idea of transformation in public culture and reduces its scope to the pleasures of a private group who identify with one another as gallery-goers.*

*(Bishop 2004)*

As Bishop mentioned, the microtopia created by *Untitled (Free)* existed within a gallery, not in a public and democratic space. That is, the relation was not totally accessible to everyone. With respect to this point, I was eager to set up my work in a democratic space where everyone, from the young to the old and the poor to the rich, can take part in the work and communicate with each other, thus arranging a truer microtopia.

### 2.1.1. Related works: Examples of Microtopia

In this chapter, I present works related to the key concept of this thesis, microtopia. Differently interpreted microtopias created by people working in various fields, including architecture, design, and art, and on different topics will be mentioned.

#### 2.1.1.1. Flexible Dwellings: Movie, Microtopia, 2013

For most of us, including myself, a “house” refers to a spacious, cozy, and mostly fixed entity that has permanence. In an age of growing population, and especially an age in which immigration has been a serious social issue in many countries, society demands

different kinds of living systems. Microtopia deals with this issue.

The documentary film Microtopia deals with flexible dwellings and new versions of housing that arise based on novel situations and constantly changing surroundings. That is, the film can be defined as a provocative look at the international tendency of down-sizing, micro-housing and living off-the-grid.

In the film, architects, artists, and ordinary problem-solvers who are eager to create new types of dwellings devise different and surprising forms of residence based on each one’s professional field. Microtopia allows us to understand the different personal motivations for designing these novel housing structures and see what they made or are making in different spots, including nature, sidewalk, rooftops, and industrial landscapes.

Figure 5: Movie, Microtopia, 2013



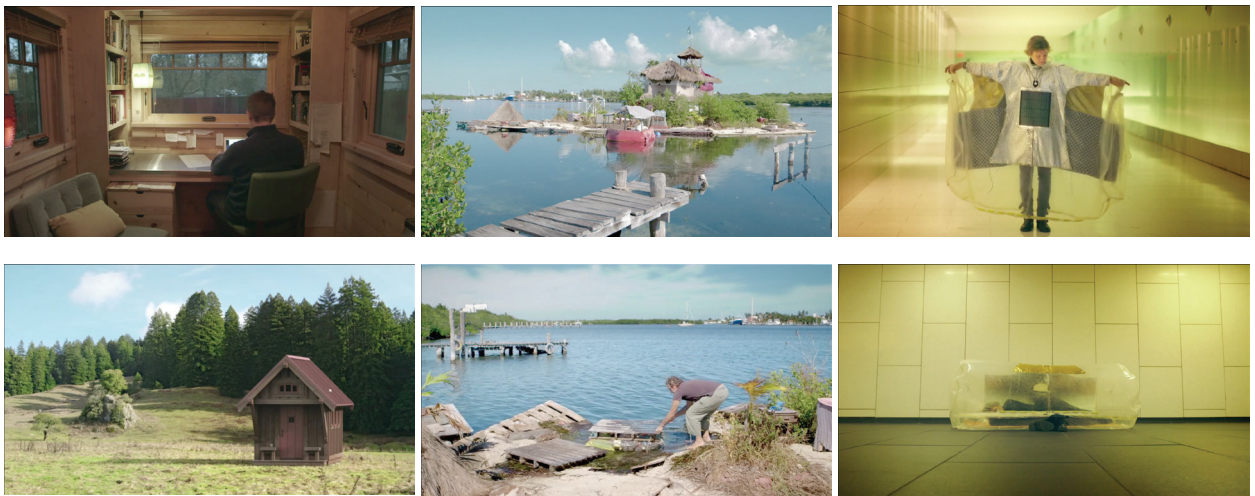


Figure 6 (left to right): JAY SHAFER, RICHART SOWA and ANA REWAKOWICZ

#### - JAY SHAFER

Graton, Northern California

JAY SHAFER starts with the question, “What is actually necessary?” He could not afford to pay housing costs, so he built his own living space. JAY tried to figure out what he actually needed and to get rid of everything he deemed unnecessary, which allowed his abode to be tiny. He removed wasted and unnecessary space. In addition, by putting a house on wheels, he made it no longer, technically, a building, so it became free from many constraints such as building costs and it could be as small as he wanted. JAY is planning to make a village consisting of his small trailer houses.

He stated, “I feel very much more alive in a small space which only contains ‘necessary space’.”

#### - RICHART SOWA

Artist

Isla Mujeres, Mexico

RICHART SOWA has been interested in ecology from an early age. He utilizes ‘trash’ that, in its current form, damages the environment and tries to turn the materials into something beneficial, creating more areas for people to live.

He is always thinking about spiritual as well as ecological matters, and considers what the future would be like with more people and fewer plants. An idea came to his mind: using trash to make a floating garden, which gets stronger as time goes by. RICHART is in the process of making a floating island out of plastic balls and other trash, which is getting bigger and bigger. One shipping pallet supported by bags of plastic bottles tied together is one unit of the island. The whole

island, including the house, is made of 70 percent recycled materials. RICHART stresses uniqueness, variety in life, and a spirit that flows within dwellings, which he said became possible after starting this project.

- ANA REWAKOWICZ

Artist

Montreal, Canada

The current situation, in which people often move and change languages, made ANA seriously think about 'nomadism,' which has greatly influenced her works. ANA started by considering questions of belonging, space, and the specific question, "Where is my home?" She denies the idea of a 'Homeland' as a place of belonging. She stated that the 'modern nomad' does not stay stuck in a certain structure, but has a kind of open mindedness in terms of living spaces. In a house that ANA made, she would be protected and

isolated, but at the same time, she would be a part of an environment. ANA's idea regarding home is that home can be basically anywhere, as home is wherever you are.

The term 'microtopia' is used in terms of dwellings in this film: portable, flexible, and adaptable housing suitable for contemporary situations, which create independence from present-day typical housing structures.

In the film, each person defines 'microtopia' differently and incorporates his or her self-defined microtopia into their housing, be it space-efficient, cost-effective, or nomadic. Microtopia provides good examples of different interpretations of the term by different experts and explores how each individual creates a unique space. It is safe to say that each expert in the film arranges a 'small but temporal, realized utopia' in reality from a residential point of view.





Figure 7: Figment Project



#### 2.1.1.2. Participatory Art: Relational Art

Because of arranging moments of interactive and mutual participation, participatory art works are strongly connected to the idea of microtopia. One participatory art project that has given me inspiration is discussed in this chapter.

*"Art is not just something that you stand still and quietly look at—it is something you participate in. You touch it, smell it, write on it, talk to it, dance with it, play with it, and learn from it. Interactive art creates a dynamic collaboration between the artist, the audience and their environment."*

(c.f., <http://www.figmentproject.org/>)

##### 2.1.1.2.1. FIGMENT Project

FIGMENT is an art forum in the form of free participatory artistic events and exhibitions that began in July of 2007 as a one-day event on Governors Island in New York Harbor. Since then, the event has been getting ever larger with the support of various volunteers, participants, artists, and individual donations, and expanding into different locations, including Chicago, Washington, DC, Toronto, and Geelong. The following is FIGMENT's vision for art:

It is crucial for today's artists to discover new ways of creating, sharing, and communicating with the public, especially given the current challenging economic times. In this light, FIGMENT is considered an alternative to contemporary commercial artistic practices, which are expensive, exclusive, passive, and untouchable.

There is no interruption by commercial concerns in FIGMENT; there is no commercial advertising, no sponsorships, and even no payment for staff and artists. Thus, it is safe to say that pure desire to share creativity

generates FIGMENT.

FIGMENT involves microtopias in which participants interact and participate in the process of creating artwork, which means that people become active subjects rather than passive viewers.

### 2.1.1.3. Eating design

The work of Marije Vogelzang is also relevant to the concept of microtopia. She is renowned as an 'eating designer.' She designs moments of interaction with participants by means of food.



Figure 8: Pasta Sauna, 2009

#### 2.1.1.3.1. Marije Vogelzang

##### - PASTA SAUNA (2009)

Dutch eating designer Marije Vogelzang arranged a food art installation entitled PASTA SAUNA for the third edition of the biennial new visual art performance that is a part of Performa 09 in New York City.

Inspired by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1932 *The Futurist Cookbook* that condemned pasta because it induced "lethargy, pessimism, nostalgic inactivity, and neutralism," the goal of the "Pasta Sauna" was to give audience members "the chance to be as lazy and un-energetic as they want." (c.f., <http://www.eatmedaily.com/2009/11/pasta-sauna-by-marije-vogelzang-at-performa-09/>) PASTA SAUNA has a spirit that is similar to that of a regular sauna, but the water vapor comes from boiling pasta instead of from hot coals.

*"On arrival, you're greeted by jumpsuit-clad attendants and handed a glass bowl of pasta dough. Inside the "Pasta Sauna," attendants at the top of tall ladders rolled the*

*dough out on pasta machines connected to mechanical music boxes playing paper rolls. After a few passes, the pasta is dropped straight into a pot of boiling water directly below. A few minutes later, the pasta is ready. Back outside, pepper grinders, olive oil, sea salt, and herbs await."*

*(c.f., <http://www.eatmedaily.com/2009/11/pasta-sauna-by-marije-vogelzang-at-performa-09/>)*

Through the installation, Marije attempted to construct a small but clear-cut space with a strong message, 'Be slow and fresh,' where participants could be as lazy and relaxed as possible, which is difficult in modern life owing to many people's hectic routines. In this manner, I view PASTA SAUNA as having created a moment of microtopia through food and public participation.

## 2.2. Reasons for choosing the Kamppi shopping center

Based on my personal interest in the concept of microtopia and selective investigations into the term and related works, I have been eager to implement fieldwork in a 'real' space and chose a public, crowded one in Helsinki. I chose the Kamppi Shopping Center for

the implementation as it is one of the busiest public spots in Helsinki, which is a very important consideration. It is a crazily busy, messy, complex place with a mixed cultural atmosphere, as well as being totally the opposite at the same time, which allows me as an artist to utilize various spatial contexts. Furthermore, I had previous experience implementing a public installation in the Kamppi shopping center with my previous course

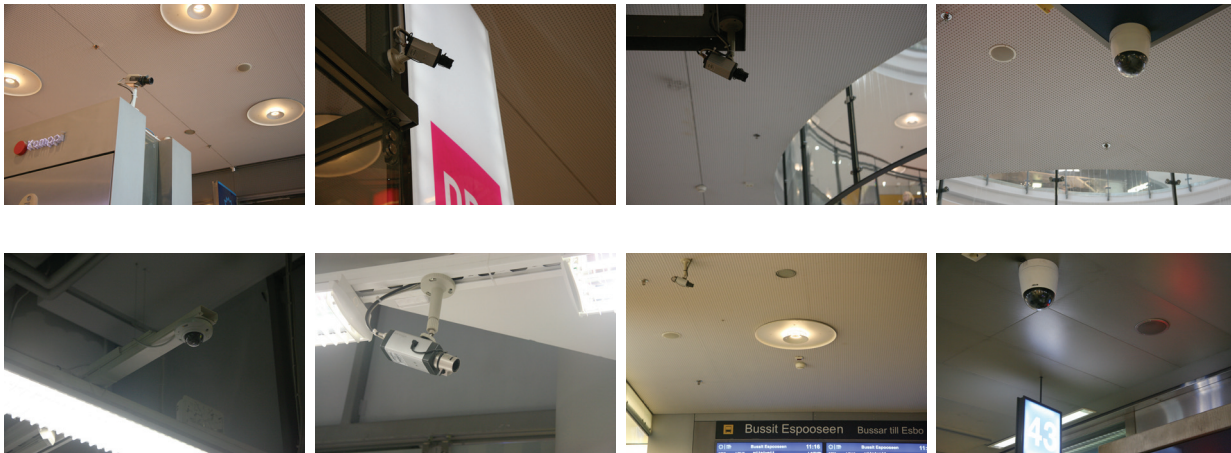


Figure 9: Personal Documentation (Analysis of Kamppi Shopping Center)

work, Interruption. I wished to thoroughly reassess the Kamppi shopping center and use the space for another type of work. Thus, I decided to arrange a novel moment around the idea of something 'refreshing,' which can be either peaceful or totally radical, for the public in the Kamppi shopping center; I attempted to add a temporal spatial layer to the existing Kamppi context.

Microtopia can vary depending on context and perspective, as I stated in the previous chapters; it differs depending on physical space and social relations. In this regard, I plan to reframe microtopia considering existing spatial and social contexts and explore microtopia with the participation of the public in this work. The followings are the impressions that I got in the Kamppi shopping center:

*Public space, but privately owned space  
Open for everyone, but there are many security guards who control the flow of people  
Something considered strange or that hampers the flow of foot traffic would be immediately removed by the guards  
Invisible protection, control, and rules defi-*

*nately exist*

*Who has access, and who does not?*

An interesting point caught my attention: Kamppi shopping center seems to be a public space, in which people commute every day, meet up with others, and purchase items; a multitude of events are happening there every second. That is, everyone can be inside the center basically. But, at the same time, Kamppi shopping center coexists with public transportation, from the metro to bus terminals, and is a privately owned space with many different kinds of commercial shops; this all means that there are rules that aim to control the surroundings in a safe and profitable manner.

Additionally, safety guards are visibly present in every corner of Kamppi shopping center. Their job is to watch people in the center and try to keep the space free of hazards and obstructions. A tour of the security department of Kamppi shopping center in which I took part last spring for the course Media intervention in the city left me with the following impression: behind the bright, organized, and safe space of the shopping center, there is a gray, cold area, the 'Monitoring area,'

where all goings on in the center are being monitored on multiple screens. It was quite interesting for me to acknowledge the ironically coexisting nature of these two areas in Kamppi Shopping center.

The following statement is a characteristic of space that I wish to focus on in this thesis:

*"Place is a practiced space. Space is a social dynamic, an incessant movement. It's a wave or, rather, a whirlpool.*

*Place is not the permanent a priority of that flow but its momentary destination or rather, its synthesis. Place is to space what solid is to fluid, form to process: an anchor, a grounding. That is to say: space as social dynamic - constantly changing, constantly developing – manifests itself through place."*

*(Merrifield 1993)*

That is to say, I would like to arrange a constantly developing and moving 'space' with my work in a specific 'place,' Kamppi shopping center, by utilizing the characteristics of the social dynamics present in the center.

I have to mention here that although my major is Spatial Design, which shares a great amount with architecture and interior design, I am more interested in conceptual and intangible spaces than physically touchable and logical ones. For this reason, my thesis is conceptual and artistic. This is also why I wish to maintain the 'moving and changing' characteristics of space in terms of social interventions.



### 2.3. Surveillance issues in public space

On the basis of site analysis of Kamppi Shopping Center, and considering the key concept of microtopia, I narrowed down my starting point, which was originally broad and ambiguous, to ‘surveillance issues in public space.’ I am going to communicate with people about surveillance in Kamppi shopping center and explore the ideal level of surveillance, which is the level that makes people happy and as comfortable as possible. It is safe to mention that I chose the subject of surveillance in Kamppi as one example of exploring microtopias.

Actually, surveillance has become a hot issue because of its controversial nature. The following article explains this issue.

*“Even after the identification of the Boston bombing suspects through grainy security-camera images, officials say that blanketing a city in surveillance cameras can create as many problems as it solves. A network of cameras on city streets and other public*

*spaces increases the chances of capturing a criminal on video but can generate an overwhelming amount of evidence to sift through. The cameras make some people feel more secure, knowing that bad guys are being watched. But privacy advocates and other citizens are uneasy with the idea that Big Brother is monitoring their every public move...”*

*(c.f., <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/26/tech/innovation/security-cameras-boston-bombings/>)*

The article refers to the pros and cons of surveillance cameras right after bombings at the Boston Marathon in 2013. I do not hold any radically negative or positive views on surveillance in public spaces, basically. Instead, I have a firm, moderate opinion: with a consistent and reasonable level of surveillance, it is possible to keep a certain level of safety in a public arena. Otherwise, the public space would become messy and chaotic, and users of the space would feel unsafe in the end. But as stated in the above article, because of its double-sided characteristics, it is vital to find and keep ‘the proper level’ of

surveillance, which is definitely difficult issue to clearly conclude but would be meaningful to try to find the point. And this is the very thing that I want to discuss with people.

### 2.3.1. Related works: Surveillance art / Performance

Because of their controversial nature, surveillance issues have been dealt with by individuals in various fields using different means of expression. In this chapter, some interesting works dealing with surveillance issues in different ways are presented, from a self-surveillance project to an artistic video installation.



#### 2.3.1.1. ACCESS project

ACCESS is an interactive art installation, planned by Marie Sester, that combines Internet, computer programming, sound, and lighting systems; the main idea is that web users can track individuals in public spaces by using the unique ACCESS system of robotic spotlights and acoustic beams. It can be called as “user-generated surveillance”. The robotic spotlight follows the tracked individuals and automatically projects an acoustic beam that only the tracked can hear. In that situation, many things are un-

clear, including who is doing the tracking and why an individual is being tracked; a tracked individual does not know whether he/she is the only person who can hear the audio. In addition, web users do not know that their actions generate any sound that the targeted individual can hear.

The intentionally vague ACCESS system addresses the fascination of being controlled, visible, and vigilant, which is fun and scary at the same time.

ACCESS aims to remind users of the pervasive application of surveillance, celebrity, and detection, and the influence of those factors

Figure 10:  
ACCESS Project





Figure 11: Three eggs, 1975-1982

on our society.

The primary inspiration for ACCESS was the beauty of surveillance outcomes, like 3D laser scans and x-rayed bodies, invisible collected data, and the power inherent in surveillance. (c.f., <http://www.accessproject.net>)

The ACCESS project deals with surveillance issues in a playful and participatory manner, which represents ironic aspects of surveillance: scary and fun, obsession and fascination, control and resistance. That is, it is impossible to know who is actually in control. I want similar themes to resonate in my TWO BOXES installation; I want to make people participate, experience their surroundings and the reality of surveillance in a joyful way, and think about issues of surveillance.

#### 2.3.1.2. Nam Jun Paek

Three eggs, 1975-1982

Video, video camera, 2 color television receivers,

2 eggs

195.6 x 122

Three eggs is a video installation in which Paik brings together an egg observed by a camera, its transmitted live image on the next screen, and an empty box with another egg inside of it, which seems to be a mirrored image of the transmission. The work represents a cyclical loop of the current surveillance age through a 'closed circuit,' in which an image, an egg, is trapped and confined.

The artist deals with pervasive surveillance issues in a sinister and ironic way in order to highlight the intrusive and subjective nature of surveillance in a simple and clear presentation. (c.f., <http://www.artlyst.com/articles/nam-june-paik-at-tate-modern-the-optimistic-shaman-of-technology>)



Figure 12: Weiweicam Project

### 2.3.1.3. Ai Wei Wei

#### Weiweicam project

Weiweicam is 'self-surveillance' project; Chinese artist Ai Weiwei installed four live webcams in his Beijing home a year after Chinese authorities imprisoned him for 81 days. Ai's activism made him a thorn in the side of Chinese authorities, which finally caused them to take him into custody. Ai was released in about two months but was given one year of probation; the situation became motivation for the Weiweicam project. The project consists of a camera set up over his bed, two at his desk, and one observing his courtyard, which can be freely accessed 24 hours a day by anyone on the web site, <http://weiweicam.com>.

*searched, every day I am being followed, there are surveillance cameras in front of my house. So I was wondering, why don't I put some (cameras) in there so people can see all my activities? I can do that and I hope the other party (authorities) can also show some transparency," he told AFP.*

*(c.f., <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/china-artist-ai-weiwei-sets-home-webcams-065240828.html>)*

Weiweicam is a symbolic and influential reference to the 24-hour police surveillance that he has been subjected to since his imprisonment. In addition, it was wise of him to devise this project using the easiest and most powerful means of access, the Internet, to promote his ideas.

*"In my life, there is so much surveillance and monitoring -- my phone, my computer... Our office has been searched, I have been*

#### 2.3.1.4. Pilvi Takala

##### - The Real Snow White, 2009

9:15 min Video

In The Real Snow White, Pilvi dresses up as Snow White and visits Disneyland. Security guards prevent her from entering, mentioning that her presence might create confusion and misbehavior; there is the 'real Snow White' in the amusement park, and visitors might confuse Pilvi for her. In other words, anything even slightly out of control was subject to immediate removal by the guards because it might evoke fear of the 'real' character. The ironic aspect is that Disneyland sells similar

costumes in its shops, encouraging visitors to dress up, but the costumes are only meant for children, not adults.

Pilvi's experience highlights a kind of surveillance happening around us. Disneyland appears happy, joyful, and fun, but is actually being closely observed by controlling factors.

##### - Bag lady Project

Bag Lady slide show 2006

Bag Lady book 2007

Bag Lady performance 2008

"Bag lady" was a week-long performance. Pilvi Takala went to a shopping mall in Berlin



Figure 13 (top and bottom):  
The Real Snow White and  
Bag lady Project

carrying a lot of cash in a transparent plastic bag. Although the artist behaved just like an average customer, she was blocked by a security guard. Pilvi challenged the secure and pleasant atmosphere of the shopping mall, and presented a threat according to the people responsible for maintaining the mall. Her actions cast light on the constant public surveillance and control that exists in a shopping mall where commercial interests and money take priority over everything else.

The two performance-based artworks discussed above are relevant to the issue of surveillance in many ways: the artist was slightly different from the normal public in Disneyland or a shopping mall – just wearing a Snow White costume or holding a normal transparent bag with some cash – but in both cases the individuals were blocked by guards. In both works, the guards were groups of people who were in charge of maintaining security in a public space and keeping the public safe from any perceived threats or abnormalities. This is the general condition of public surveillance these days.

## **2.4. Application of theory to this thesis**

I introduced one essential keyword, 'microtopia', as the starting point of this thesis. Next, I decided on Kamppi Shopping Center as the site for implementation of my ideas and narrowed down the very broad starting point to 'surveillance issues in the public sphere.' In the rest of this paper, I will present a public installation that I did in order to explore the concept of microtopia in Kamppi.

The above-mentioned 'constant surveillance' makes it possible for many public spaces, including Disneyland and shopping malls, to maintain safety and functionality; if not for surveillance, it might become impossible to sustain these spaces. This is, however, only my personal opinion regarding surveillance in the public sphere. I became eager to ask others about their opinions and feelings concerning surveillance issues and to create a microtopia in the Kamppi shopping center based on relational intervention at the site. This became the focus of my installation in Kamppi.

**CHAPTER**





# 3

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**Project Details**



### 3.1. TWO BOXES

#### 3.1.1. Concept and background

TWO BOXES is a participatory installation designed as a 'research process' that is intended to explore microtopia based on the issue of surveillance in Kamppi shopping center. TWO BOXES aims to allow people to participate in the two extremes of surveillance and give feedback, which will be reflected in my exploration of microtopia in Kamppi shopping center.

#### - Summary of installation

As the name implies, the installation fundamentally consists of two boxes: one is totally visible inside, as it is only a frame, and the other is totally the opposite, made of opaque surfaces with tiny holes in them. The visible box represents 'total surveillance' as a person inside the box can be seen by everyone around the installation. The invisible box, on the other hand, represents 'total freedom from surveillance,' as it creates a space in which a person inside cannot be seen from the outside.

#### - Story behind TWO BOXES: change in main materials and design

At the beginning of this project, I thought I would make use of mirrored acrylic panels, which are widely employed by police for security reasons. The original concept of the installation was to have one box made of that mirrored material, which would allow people inside the box to see the outside but prevent people on the outside from seeing what is happening on the inside. Doing so may have been closer to the ideal microtopia in terms of surveillance in Kamppi considering the large number of CCTVs and security guards; people might be happy or feel more comfortable when totally shielded from the surveillance.

However, there was a vital problem: the cost of mirrored acrylic panels was so much expensive than I expected because of both the big size of the installation and the super expensive cost of the material itself. Therefore, I had to come up with another way of realizing my idea. Instead of designing one mirrored box, I chose to incorporate more dynamic and playful elements in the work. Thus, I decided to design two contrasting

boxes: one is in line with the original idea of the mirrored box, which is 'total freedom from surveillance,' and the other is completely transparent and represents 'total surveillance.'

### 3.1.2. The installation (experiments)

- WHEN

8 and 9 of Feb, 2016

Time: 11 to 18 / 15 to 18

- WHERE

Kamppi shopping center / Round square

- Instructions for the installation

1. Let one person be inside each box for 2 minutes
2. Let people experience the two extremes
3. Get feedback from them

I assumed that the reactions and feelings about being in the two different boxes would vary depending on the personalities of the participants; for instance, one participant might feel safe in the visible box because if anything happens, the people around him or her could help, whereas another might feel safer in the invisible box, given that he or she is free from surveillance. By experimenting with the two extremes with Kamppi shopping center users as my subjects, I aimed to get people's reactions, feelings, and thoughts about the installation that conceptually refers to surveillance in Kamppi, and to explore 'what or which level' approaches a microtopia based on issues of surveillance.

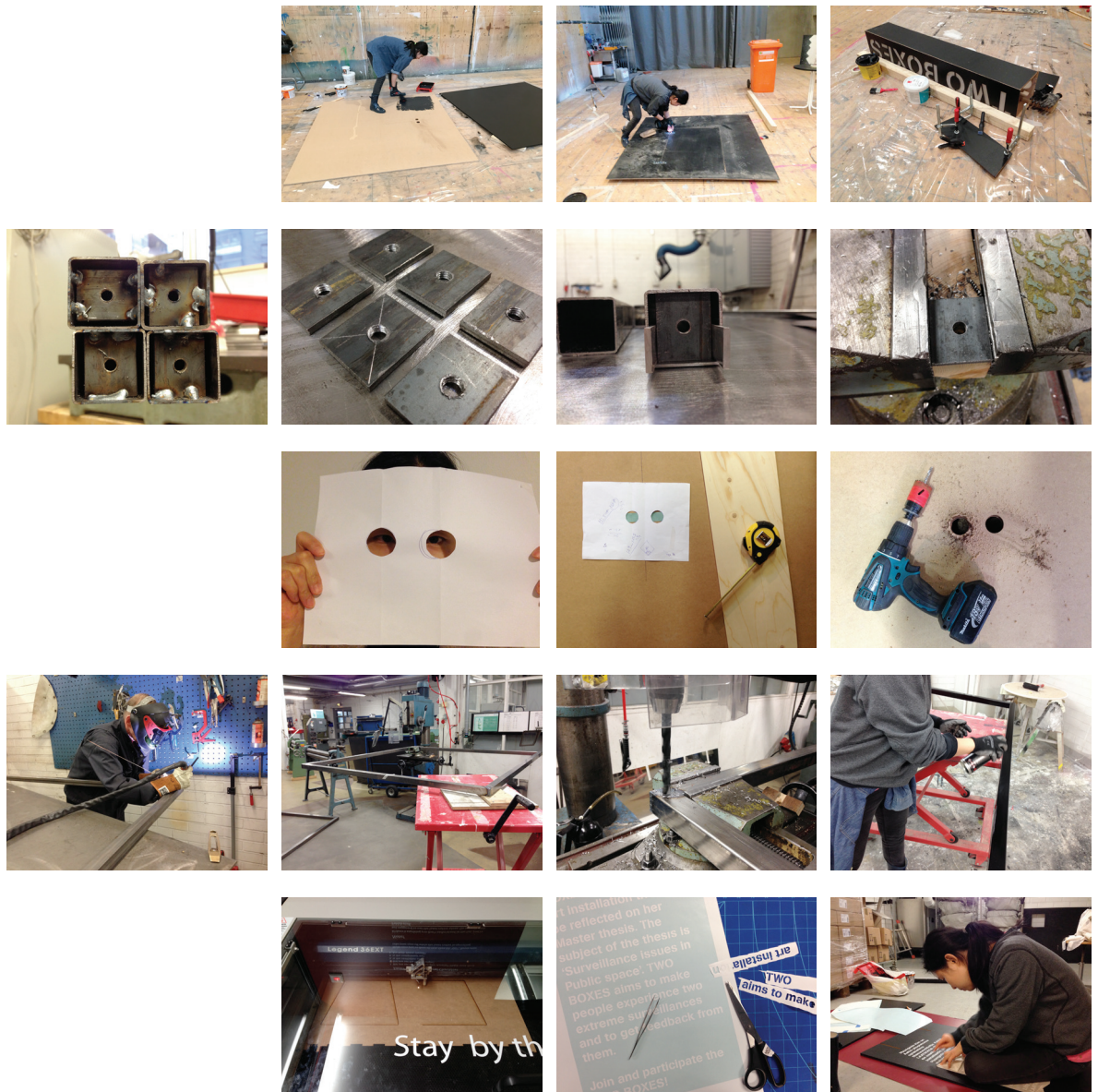


Figure 14: Process Photos

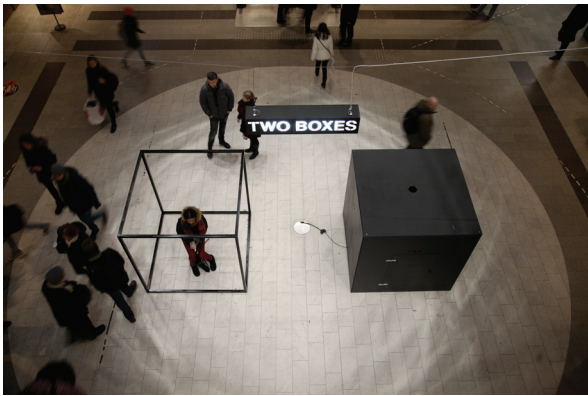






Figure 15: TWO BOXES Implementation

### 3.1.3. Participant Reactions and Analysis





I conducted more than 60 interviews over the two days that TWO BOXES was up in the Kamppi shopping center, which is far more interviews than I expected at first. The interviewees ranged from young students to the elderly, and represented various nationalities and backgrounds because of Kamppi's main function as a public transportation hub. One interesting point was that the reactions varied widely depending on the people who were interviewed, more specifically, depending on their jobs, life experiences, and personal characteristics. I received comments which I expected, but also many that I did not expect, and they came from various perspectives; this allowed me to learn a great deal.

I summed up some interesting comments into the right table in order for readers to easily understand based on my personal criteria, 'expected comments' and 'unexpected comments'. There were quite a number of participants who mentioned that they felt comfortable and safe and even enjoyed the experience of sitting in the open box because they felt they were connected to the space and the crowd around them. In the

black box, many interviewees experienced positive feelings, from comfort to joyfulness. But at the same time, many participants expressed uneasiness about being in the black box, which was quite unexpected comments. It was clear that people like to interact with others and to feel connected to others, as they could in the open box.

What I took away from those reactions was the notion that people feel much differently about the same state of surveillance. At the beginning, I thought that it would be possible to sum up all the feedback that I got and draw specific conclusions. However, after the installation was implemented, rather than drawing definite conclusions from the participants' comments, I decided that it was much more meaningful for me to have created a platform for participation and communication about a common issue – surveillance in public space – in the form of a playful and participatory installation. I cannot draw clear conclusions from TWO BOXES, as the reactions to it were so varied, but I can say that all of the comments I received are meaningful and precious and indicated that the participants experienced a short but strong moment of relational interaction.

Figure 16: Analysis of participant reactions

Expected comments	
	<p><i>"I felt like I was standing with naked.. Rather than I am looking, but somebody is looking at me, so nervous and getting restless, uneasy, I couldn't find how to behave sitting here."</i></p> <p><i>"I felt I am in the TV show, all people around me are looking at me, which was scared and stressed out."</i></p> <p><i>"Uncomfortable because everyone is walking, passing and looking at me, always. Everyone is paying as much attention to you as possible here."</i></p> <p><i>"Weird, I was like an art piece. I felt much more exposed like somehow naked. I was an object of attention."</i></p>
	<p><i>"Felt more comfortable, people outside cannot see me but I can see all people around, less nervous."</i></p> <p><i>"Getting more comfortable, I could become myself here inside, I could see someone outside without any disturbance."</i></p> <p><i>"Spying on people, felt protected and cozy, comfortable definitely."</i></p> <p><i>"Peaceful, looks like toilet more comfortable."</i></p> <p><i>"Relaxing, feel more comfortable. They don't know I am here."</i></p>
Unexpected comments	
	<p><i>"Better to stay because I felt I was a part of this space."</i></p> <p><i>"More comfortable because I could feel I was a part of this whole movement (crowd). Hidden but not hidden."</i></p> <p><i>"Like it more, Could contact with people walking, eyes from them which was exiting. I could be active, more interesting."</i></p> <p><i>"People were on their way and seemed too busy to look at what is happening here. So rather, I could be at the role of observing the moving people, which was fun. Prefer this."</i></p>
	<p><i>"Lonely, alone, boring, kind of dull"</i></p> <p><i>"It was quite scared and uncomfortable because specific people came to right near the holes in order to see inside the box 'quite long time, about 3 to 5 seconds'. Time went slowly."</i></p>

**CHAPTER**







# 4

## Summary and Conclusion

This thesis focuses on my passion to realize ‘actually existing utopia’ with the concept of ‘microtopia’. It detailed research into the concept and related works by experts in different fields. Using Kamppi Shopping center in Helsinki as a specific site, this thesis attempted to explore the creation of a microtopia based on surveillance in a public space; the idea to do so was derived from previous fieldwork in Kamppi shopping center. TWO BOXES, a participatory public installation, was devised as a means of allowing people to experience two different conditions and give feedback. This thesis tells the story of TWO BOXES, from how it was devised, to the message I wanted to deliver, to feedback from participants. In this chapter, I will wrap up my thesis by discussing what I learned through this project, giving ideas for future works, and detailing the pros and cons of TWO BOXES.

#### 4.1. Learning Outcomes

June, one of my friends who assisted with TWO BOXES, said to me,

*“It is really interesting that participants, passerby and people with curiosity about what is happening here started to gather together and talk about the TWO BOXES and share this moment.”*

At the beginning, when I chose ‘microtopia’ as a key concept driving this thesis, I wanted to create a microtopia in the context of the Kamppi shopping center. However, while proceeding with TWO BOXES and interacting with participants, it became more meaningful for me to arrange ‘a certain place or moment’ in which people participate, communicate, debate, and think together about what defines a microtopia in terms of surveillance in the public sphere, rather than to make a tangible microtopia. This was certainly the most important learning outcome of the participatory installation TWO BOXES.

I noticed some clear drawbacks of TWO BOXES based on participants' feedback. First, the materials and design of TWO BOXES led some participants to react in a way that I did not intend. For instance, the black box, which I designed to represent 'total freedom/block from surveillance,' could not completely convey my meaning for two reasons.

1. Wooden construction: the wooden sides and top completely blocked participants' view and created a space void of visual surroundings, which made some people feel isolated, lonely, scared, and even as though they were in a tightly controlled situation, as in a cage at a zoo. Thus, the sides of the box did not create the intended atmosphere of a space where a participant inside could freely observe those on the outside but could not be observed by others.

2. Holes: Even though participants in the closed box were able to observe the outside through the small holes, many people felt instead that the holes permitted others to peer in at them rather than the other way around.

This is the opposite of the 'total freedom from surveillance' that I sought to arrange.

By contrast, the open frame box was quite successful in conveying the feeling of being completely observable. The metal frame that made up the open box, and the absence of any other materials that would obstruct the view of passersby, made it such that participants would be seen immediately and clearly by the public.

However, the characteristics of Kamppi Shopping Center itself gave rise to unexpected results: people in the Kamppi Shopping Center are generally too busy, going to work, to appointments, or home, to stop and pay much attention to what is happening around them. Also, the spot in which TWO BOXES was placed was at the center of the busiest area for public transportation, which includes both bus terminals and metro stations.

Therefore, many people did not have enough time to create the feeling of 'surveillance,' but instead just passed by. So, the nature of the spot could not generate the level of surveillance that would have been necessary for a successful feeling of being observed.

On account of the above-mentioned drawbacks of TWO BOXES, I cannot say that the installation was successful. However, because of those drawbacks, I learned what I did wrong and which aspects of the installation were insufficient to deliver the message I set out to deliver, and became eager to plan a revised version of TWO BOXES that reflects what I learned.

## 4.2. Future works

Using participants' comments and the knowledge of the drawbacks of TWO BOXES, I wish to amend the installation in future. Here, I introduce a plan for a revised version of TWO BOXES and Exploration of Microtopia as an ongoing project.

*"Something middle would be the best."*

Many participants made the above statement, in one form or another. During the process of creating and implementing TWO BOXES, I came to the conclusion that the original mirrored materials that I wished to utilize would be ideal in creating the intended situation. Therefore, a modified version of TWO BOXES will consist of a mirrored box and a transparent acrylic box as originally designed.

If I can combine the following two aspects (which may seem at odds with one another) into the next version, with the help of mirrored materials, I am certain that the installation will produce an experience that is nearer

to a microtopia in terms of surveillance issues in the public sphere.

1. Sense of belonging: given what I learned from participants' feedback, people tend to want a sense of belonging in both boxes. Therefore, it will be ideal if I can maintain a participant's field of view, which makes people feel connected to the crowd or feel as though they are one with the space they inhabit.

2. Protection from surveillance: Despite the above statement, it was quite clear that people tended to feel more comfortable when shielded from others' eyes. Thus, the second important change in the next version would be completely blocking the view from the outside of the box so that no one can see inside in any way at all, which would eliminate participants' shy, uneasy, or uncomfortable feelings.

An installation that combines the above-mentioned factors will make up the next version of TWO BOXES.

Furthermore, I wish to expand this project

under the title 'The Exploration of Microtopia' into many different locations. It would be extremely interesting and meaningful to explore the concept of microtopia in different contexts with different stories, people, and materials through communication with participants.

In addition to this basic idea, it will be interesting to revise the means of obtaining responses. Although it was also nice to directly conduct interviews with participants and hear their comments myself, inducing participants to create 'something tangible' regarding their participation or feelings may be a more interesting way to understand them and have their feelings expressed in a public space. In this manner, in the next project, I would like to devise some other way of collecting the public's comments that will produce a tangible outcome.



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